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California Farm News

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CENSUS GIVES FARMERS A VOICE IN THEIR FUTURE 2007 Census of Agriculture Coming Soon

SACRAMENTO, December 10, 2007 – America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to make their voices heard and help shape the future of agriculture for years to come. Beginning in January, that opportunity will come to their mailboxes in the form of the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other issues. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

"The Census of Agriculture provides information that is not available anywhere else – information that benefits agricultural producers and their communities in myriad ways," said Vic Tolomeo, Director of the California Field Office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

"For instance, policymakers factor Census data into decisions concerning agricultural and rural programs. Community planners use Census to target needed services to rural residents. Companies rely on Census data when determining where to locate their operations. And farmers themselves can use Census data to help make critical decisions about their businesses," Tolomeo explained.

NASS will mail out Census forms on December 28, 2007 to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online via a secure web site.

"We're committed to making this Census the best count ever. It's about the future of agriculture and rural communities in California," Tolomeo said. "Regardless of how large or small an operation or what kinds of products are produced, California farmers and ranchers will help themselves and their communities by filling out the Census and returning it promptly," he added. "We want farmers and ranchers to know that the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future and their responsibility."

For more information about the 2007 Census of Agriculture, please contact the NASS California Field Office at 1-800-851-1127 or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov online.

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